



**PROTECTING OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS
AS COVID-19 INFECTION RATES ESCALATE
July 16, 2021**

Dear Colleagues in the Gospel,

The recent surge of COVID-19 cases, spurred by the highly contagious Delta variant, has seen [the number of new positive cases in Florida jump dramatically](#). Six weeks ago, during the week of June 11, there were 10,463 new cases of COVID-19 reported. Three weeks later, during the week of July 2, that number more than doubled to 23,697. The positivity rate on June 11 was 3.3%. Three weeks later, the week of July 2, the positivity rate jumped to 7.8%. During the same three-week period of time, the number of administered vaccinations decreased from 415k to 207k. After a long, slow decline, the number of COVID-19 cases has changed its course and is now on the rise, as are COVID-related hospitalizations. [Statistically the 18-49-year-old age group is at greater risk for COVID-19 infection and is currently responsible for more hospitalizations than those 65 and older](#). In fact, despite being fully vaccinated and taking precautions, La Nora Holcombe, the wife of our Canon to the Ordinary Scott Holcombe, tested positive for COVID-19 on July 10. As a result, she and Canon Scott are both in quarantine until July 24.

Now is the time for our diocesan lay and clergy leaders to prayerfully review and discuss with their congregational leadership the Diocese of Central Florida's most current COVID-19 policies (v. 5/23/21) - <https://cfdiocese.org/covid-19>. The Mayor of Orange County has encouraged people to remain masked indoors when in enclosed spaces, whether fully vaccinated or not. [The CDC is also encouraging the wearing of masks in indoor public spaces](#), as well as in outdoor settings for activities with close contact with others who may not be vaccinated.

Because of these alarming statistics and recommendations by municipal and medical entities, I will continue to follow the practices listed below:

1. I will mask whenever I am around people less than six feet away unless I know everyone around me is fully vaccinated.
2. I will mask when I am presiding and distributing communion.
3. I will wear disposable gloves when handling the elements.
4. I will continue to offer communion in one kind, or by pre-intincted wafers.

These are the practices I will follow whenever I am serving in one of our local congregations. Likewise, I will observe them during our weekly Eucharist service in the Bishop's Oratory at the Diocesan Office. I would urge our Diocesan congregations to voluntarily remain in the same practices.

I would ask that you think carefully about the trust and responsibility that is commended to us. Please encourage people who have not been vaccinated to reconsider their decision. Please review and follow diocesan guidelines and, at minimum, remain masked anytime you may be in contact with persons who may not have been vaccinated. This is not only to protect your own health but the health of your sisters and brothers, as well.

I will continue to do these things because I want to do my best to provide the safest possible environment for both our parishioners, as well as visitors, to our worship services. I believe that I bear that responsibility. I believe this is a Biblical expression of loving and serving one another.

May God provide you wisdom and ever keep you safe.

Grace to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory O. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G" and "B".

**The Rt. Rev. Gregory O. Brewer, Bishop
Diocese of Central Florida**